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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes the relationship of service learning to the social studies and examines public policy issues as a crucial step in the service learning process. Service learning is defined and explained using the ACT (Active Citizenship Today) approach whereby students: (1) define and focus on their community; (2) research community problems, select one, and research it more fully; (3) analyze and evaluate public policies related to the problem; (4) design and implement a service project to address the problem; and (5) reflect upon and evaluate the process. Student handouts are included, as well as a resource list for further information. (EH)

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ED 395 855

Learning to serve, serving to learn...

Service Learning in the Social Studies

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

What social studies teacher hasn't dreamed of truly bringing the "real world" into the classroom? Or better yet, taking the classroom out into the world? • As educational as field trips and guest speakers can be, it can still seem that something is missing. If only students could *do something real*... and *really learn* while they did it! • Across the country, teachers are discovering that one exciting way to meet this goal is **Service Learning.**

So 025 943

CRFC
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago

AN INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE LEARNING

"Service to the community by itself can teach altruism and charity, but to become a tool of civic education it needs to be explained and combined with serious classroom work. Classroom civic education by itself can teach the theory of citizenship, but its practice depends on engagement in the real world."

Ben Barber, Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University

Although service learning is often defined as "learning by doing," it is actually much more. In a good service learning program, students learn by doing something real that needs to be done. There is a true connection between the classroom and what is happening in the community. Students develop a deeper sense of caring about others, as well as the ability to put their caring into practice.

The approach to service learning in the social studies explained here is based on the work of the Close Up Foundation and the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles in developing Active Citizenship Today (ACT). ACT is a unique social studies service learning program because it includes the analysis of public policy as a crucial step in the service learning process. While many of the materials in this publication have been adapted from ACT, the overall framework focuses on ACT's five fundamental steps.[1]

A Working Definition[2]

Service learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that ...

- *meet actual community needs;*
- *are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community;*
- *are integrated into each young person's academic curriculum;*
- *provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity;*
- *provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities;*
- *enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom;*
- *help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others.*

How Service Learning Fits with the Social Studies

While service learning can fit into many subject areas at nearly any grade level, social studies teachers have come to value the powerful connection between service learning and the goals of social studies. In an effective service learning program, what students know, what they are able to do, and what they value, intertwine with the goals of social studies education.

1 ACT is funded by the DeWitt Wallace – Reader's Digest Fund. Student materials for both middle and high school will be available in the fall of 1994. See resources, page 12 for more information on ACT.

2 From *Standards of Quality for School-Based Service Learning*. May 1993 reprinted by permission from the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform Standards Committee.

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The core of the social studies is the goal of helping students develop into effective citizens. Definitions of effective citizenship vary. One unifying theme is that in order to contribute to a democratic society, people must be able to deliberate with one another about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it, and take an active role in shaping a better society.

Service learning provides students opportunities to develop and practice the skills needed to create positive change. Whether through advancing a position on a public policy issue, volunteering in a direct service program, or forging coalitions to solve a problem, effective citizens are "doers."

Just as effective science education involves lab work, service learning can be a laboratory for civic education.

The Illinois state goals for learning in the social studies include the charge that students' schooling should enable them to, "apply the skills and knowledge gained in the social sciences to decision making in life situations." This goal is best achieved by giving students structured opportunities to make decisions in the real world.

The Service Learning Steps—Using the ACT Approach

While no two teachers will—or should—infuse service learning into their curriculum in exactly the same way, the steps of the ACT approach provide a framework for each teacher's creative implementation. In this model, students study the strengths and needs of their community, select and study a specific problem, analyze a public policy issue related to the problem, and conclude by conducting a service project and evaluating it.

STEP 1: Students define and focus on their community.

Students begin by defining "community" for the purpose of their project. Typically, they complete the *Draw Your Community* lesson included in this publication (page 6). The geographic area must be of a manageable size so that students can have an impact. They then identify the resources, strengths, and weaknesses in their community. At the close of Step 1, students brainstorm a list of community problems.

STEP 2: Students research community problems, select one, and research it more fully.

In this step, students research the problems they brainstormed. Research might involve interviewing political, community, or business leaders; creating and conducting community surveys; or attending meetings of governing bodies. Students then narrow the list of problems and select one. They conduct further research focusing on the questions, "What are the causes of the problem?" and "What are the effects of the problem?"

STEP 3: Students analyze and evaluate public policies related to the problem.

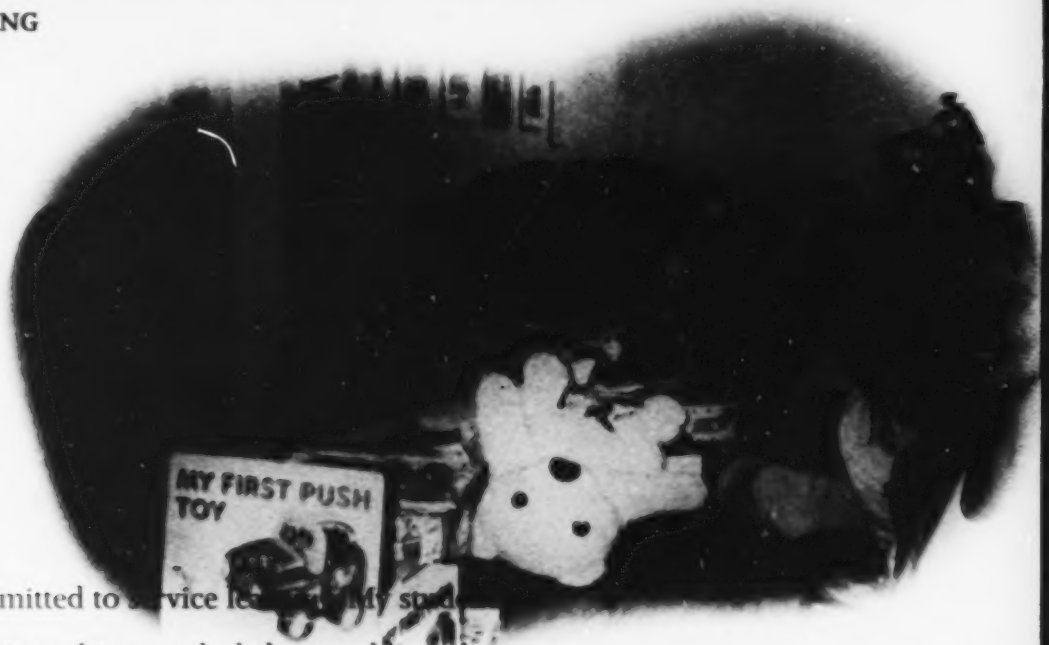
Public policies are made by citizens and/or their representatives in matters that concern the community. In this model, public policy is defined as a plan of action designed to solve a problem or achieve a goal. Students consider the existing and proposed policies to address the problem.

STEP 4: Students design and implement a service project to address the problem.

Using knowledge gleaned from research and analysis, students develop and implement a project to address the chosen problem. Projects take many forms, from raising community awareness to working in a community agency or collaborating with local government.

STEP 5: Students reflect upon and evaluate the process.

Throughout the service learning process, students are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate what they are learning. Activities structured around the questions, "How did the project help the community?" and "What did I learn from this experience?" promote academic, social, and emotional growth.



"We are committed to service learning. My students not only learned a great deal about public policy, but benefited enormously from their work with a neighborhood shelter for the homeless."

Effective service learning requires a delicate balance of community service and education components. The following local examples illustrate the standards for service learning from the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform's *Standards of Quality for School-Based Service Learning. (Reprinted here with permission.)*

1 **Effective service learning efforts strengthen service and academic learning.**
Students at Clemente High School, after studying environmental public policy, are instituting a school-wide recycling program.

2 **Model service learning provides concrete opportunities for youth to learn new skills, to think critically, and to test new roles in an environment which encourages risk-taking and rewards competence.**
Lincoln Park High School students, recognizing the growing tension between students and community residents, have opened a dialogue with the neighborhood association to define the specific problems and work together toward a solution.

3 **Preparation and reflection are essential elements in service learning.**
Students at Mundelein High School are developing a survey to evaluate adult views regarding inappropriate teen behavior so that they will know how to approach these same adults and city council members with their ideas for instituting constructive teen activities. Students also keep a weekly journal reflecting on their progress and feelings.

4 **Students' efforts are recognized by their peers and the community they serve.**
A Streamwood High School student won the Illinois Youth Volunteer award given by Lt. Governor Kustra's office for her work in promoting awareness of homelessness in the Streamwood community.

5 **Youth are involved in the planning.**
Elk Grove High School students arranged a Skate-A-Thon at a local forest preserve to raise money for local social services. They recruited students to participate from area elementary and junior high schools as well as from the high school, and worked with the forest preserve to acquire the necessary permits.

6 **The service students perform makes a meaningful contribution to the community.**
Students at Naperville North High School volunteered to renovate urban dwellings with Habitat for Humanity in Chicago.

7 **Effective service learning integrates systematic formative and summative evaluation.**
Glenbard East High School students designed a survey to assess student perception of youth activities in the Glenbard community. They are working with the owners of a local nightclub as well as a VFW hall to use space to hold "teens only" evening activities, which will be designed with an eye to survey results.

8 **Service learning connects a school and its community in new and positive ways.**
Students at Naperville North High School are planning an Awareness Day with the twin goals of helping the public realize that homelessness is a problem and making the citizenry aware of the need for volunteers at community agencies addressing the problem.

9 **Service learning is understood and supported as an integral element in the life of a school and its community.**
Reavis High School students were concerned about teenage drinking, vandalism, and gang activity in the community. Reasoning that teens might be pursuing such activities out of boredom, they are putting together a booklet called *So You Think There's Nothing To Do!* that lists activities for teens in their community.

10 **Skilled adult guidance and supervision is essential to the success of service learning.**
With the help of their teacher, students at Morgan Park High School are exploring meaningful ways they can promote respect for self and others and still keep their teen identity without antagonizing parents and school administrators.

11 **Pre-service and staff development that includes the philosophy and methodology of service learning best ensure that program quality and continuity are maintained.**
Teachers throughout the Chicago area participated in CRFC-sponsored training sessions, followed by ongoing training and technical assistance.

"The most important thing I learned is that we really can make a difference in the world and not just our high schools."

6

GETTING STARTED WITH SERVICE LEARNING

The following pages describe steps in a service learning program. A list of resources follows the steps. Some teachers may choose to try service learning based on this publication, while others may wish to seek additional information before beginning. Anyone who is contemplating a service learning project is invited to contact CRFC.

STEP 1: Defining Community

Because each student is a member of many different communities, as a first step, students define their shared community. It could be as large as a suburb or as small as the school site.

LESSON: DRAW YOUR COMMUNITY

The following lesson introduces students to the service learning process as they work creatively in groups to make decisions and generate a map that is needed later in the process.

Objectives

Students will be able to:
Identify elements common to all communities;
Cooperate with other group members;
Express their initial perceptions of the community.

Materials and Preparation

Butcher paper, colored markers.

Procedure

1. Write "community" on the board. Have students brainstorm what makes a community (*people, culture, shops, recreation, schools, local government, etc.*). List their responses on the board.

2. Have students decide what geographic boundaries define their community for the purposes of this project. The definition should be manageable for research, analysis, and the eventual service project. Decision making can be done either as a whole class or in groups, but it must be done at this early stage so that community boundaries are clear during later steps.

3. Divide the class into groups of four or five and distribute paper and markers. Tell students to draw their community, starting with the geographic boundaries (*e.g., Main Street on the West, 63rd on the North, etc.*). Using the brainstormed list from Step 1, groups of students will create a drawing of their community. Encourage them to include strengths and resources (*e.g., YMCA*) and problems or needs (*e.g., graffiti in a particular alley*).

   The result should convey the flavor of the community to a person unfamiliar with it. Each student should draw at least some of the map and be able to explain everything on it.

4. After the groups finish, allow time for each group to hang its drawing on the wall and explain it briefly to the class. Ask them to identify what is common to all of the maps, what is unique, etc.

5. For homework, have students pay attention to their surroundings on the way home. They should look for things they included in their drawings and things that should be added.

6. The next day, debrief the class by asking the following questions:
   What things in your drawings did you see on the way home?
   What would you add to your drawings?
   What are the strengths of the community?
   What are some of its problems or needs?

STEP 2: Selecting a Problem

Once the community has been defined, students choose a problem on which to focus their energy. One way to begin this part of the process is to add to the list the students created from the Draw Your Community lesson. Encourage them to expand their list by brainstorming responses to the question, "What are significant problems or needs in our community?"

Next, students research the identified problems through surveys, discussions with people already working on the problem or affected by it, and other more traditional research techniques. Any community has a number of problems worth addressing. Remind the students of the difference between a problem (*e.g., crime in the neighborhood*) and a project—which is what they will eventually conduct to address the problem. This encourages students to create a project that meets significant community needs, rather than one with surface appeal but little true impact.

After thinking through relevant issues, students apply their research to the selection of one community problem to address. Discussing the following questions will help students decide on a particular problem.

What problem...

- *has an impact on your life?*
- *affects your community the most?*
- *is the most pressing?*
- *would be interesting to work on?*
- *could you affect the most?*
- *could be influenced in the time we have?*
- *would you learn the most from?*

Given the emphasis of this service learning model on infusion into the social studies curriculum, selection of a single problem allows for a number of whole-class activities and more opportunities to link the process to the specific curriculum.

Becoming Experts on the Problem

This is a good point in the process to divide students into groups to research the problem more efficiently. Students should investigate:

- *seriousness of the problem in the community and how it compares to other communities;*
- *demographics of the problem (who is most affected? why?);*
- *history of the problem in the community, with an emphasis on how the problem has changed over time;*
- *causes of the problem;*
- *solutions to the problem, including public policies (see next step);*
- *how various institutions are addressing the problem;*
- *resources, agencies, and groups that would help with the problem;*
- *possible projects students could conduct to alleviate the problem.*

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STEP 3: The Role of Public Policy

A key factor that makes service learning a powerful tool for instruction in the social studies is the study of public policy. While there are many definitions of public policy, one relatively simple definition for students to grasp is, "a public policy that government adopts to solve a social problem."

Explicitly linking public policy analysis to service learning helps students understand the dynamics and importance of public policy in the United States. This policy analysis should be fused with the research students are doing on the problem. While it is often beneficial to analyze a variety of existing and proposed policies, time may permit the class to focus only on one.

For example, after researching juvenile crime in their community, students might analyze a number of public policies, including whether a proposed curfew ordinance would curb crimes committed by and against youth. The following are additional examples of public policies and their relationship to problems:

Problem: Many people are being killed or injured by drunk drivers.

Policy: *The state legislature increases the sentence for people convicted of driving under the influence.*

Problem: Increasing numbers of young people are joining gangs.

Policy: *The local school board changes the dress code to ban certain styles of clothing thought to show gang affiliation.*

Problem: The river in a local community is very polluted.

Policy: *The Environmental Protection Agency enforces a regulation that fines those who dump trash in the river.*

When selecting a public policy to examine, it is desirable to select one that includes as many of the following characteristics as reasonably possible:

- *affects many people;*
- *incorporates genuinely opposing positions on how policy issues should be resolved;*
- *represents a clash of significant values/principles (e.g., liberty and equality, private property rights, and equal opportunity) or interests;*
- *is a matter for collective governance and resolution;*
- *has local, state, federal, and perhaps even international applications or repercussions;*
- *is developmentally appropriate for students, i.e. the fundamental concepts are "reachable" by students;*
- *introduces or augments other outcomes that are part of the course of study;*
- *has readily available instructional resources;*
- *is authentic to students' lives, i.e. necessary for them to function effectively in a democratic society.*

Once a public policy or policies have been selected to analyze, a range of instructional activities can be used to help students answer the following:

- *What is the existing/proposed policy? What is its goal?*
- *What problems is it designed to address?*
- *Does the policy address the most important, underlying causes?*
- *If it does not address an underlying cause, does the policy alleviate some of the effects?*
- *Where did the policy come from? What is its history?*
- *If it is a legislative policy, who introduced it and why? Who opposed it and why?*
- *Who supports the policy? Who opposes it? Why?*
- *Evaluate the policy's pros and cons: claimed or expected benefits, claimed or expected costs.*
- *What about alternative policies?*
  - *Do they address causes or effects?*
  - *Do they have support or opposition? Why?*
  - *Are they being tried anywhere? How are they working?*
  - *How likely are they to be implemented?*
  - *How do they compare with existing policy or other proposed policy?*

STEP 4: Action Planning for Service Learning

Keep a planning notebook to help your group stay organized. Use the following questions and the planning form on **Handout II** to guide your planning and implementation.

a. How much time do you have to complete the project?

b. What are your goals for the project? What will be accomplished? Who will benefit?

c. What will you do to complete the project successfully?

Consider people, money, skills, and materials.

Where and how will you get these?

What activities and tasks need to be done?

Include descriptions of meetings, research, acquiring materials, making arrangements, getting permission, finding locations, etc.

What obstacles are you likely to face?

How do you plan to overcome them?

Who is likely to support your project?

How can you mobilize support to make sure your project works?

d. Using the planning form, put the activities in order of completion, determine what resources you need for each, assign a person to be in charge of each activity, and assign a date by which each activity is to be completed.

e. How will you evaluate the success of the project, both in terms of how your group worked together to achieve its goals and the actual results of the project?

Make sure to plan to evaluate throughout the project—not just at the end. These evaluation results will allow you to make mid-course changes to improve the project.

PLANNING FORM

Task	Date to be completed	Resources needed (people, skills, money, materials)	How to get them	Who will work on this task

11

12

STEP 5: Reflection and Evaluation

Throughout the service learning process students must be provided with individual and group opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their projects and their own learning.

Students should evaluate and reflect individually and in groups. Individual opportunities (*e.g., one-on-one conferences and journal writing*) give students a chance to think about their own assessment of how the project worked and what they learned. Group opportunities (*e.g., small and large group discussions*) provide time for students to listen to and discuss how others viewed the project—in short, an opportunity for dialogue.

Reflection and evaluation should be linked to the academic goals of the course. One effective way to do this is with writing prompts such as:

> *"Throughout the course we have studied the factors that make it so difficult to develop and implement public policies that will solve problems without the "unintended consequence" of creating additional problems. Discuss those factors as they apply to the policy or policies you analyzed in the service learning project."*

Opportunities must be provided for students to share with others about how their projects worked and what they learned. CRFC can identify other classes involved with service learning so students can contact a "service pen pal." Organizations in the community working on the problem are likely to be interested in what the students did and learned. Policy makers at the local, state, national, and perhaps even international levels provide another good audience for students.

Students should be encouraged to evaluate how the project is working while there is still time to make important changes. This will help students learn that evaluation can help them.

To combine reflection with evaluation, students should evaluate both the process and the results. Following are examples of questions for students to consider in each category.

Process Questions:

- *How effective was your planning? What did your group leave out? How could planning be improved?*
- *How did your group work as a team? How could the group's teamwork be improved?*
- *How well did your plan work? Were the tasks accomplished in logical ways? Did they accomplish what they were supposed to accomplish? Did you spend too much time on some things and not enough on others?*
- *What obstacles did your group encounter? How did your group solve them?*

Results Questions:

- *What did your project accomplish? Did it make a difference? How? Will the results have long-term or short-term impacts?*
- *Did the project's results justify the amount of time and resources spent? Why or why not?*
- *Would you recommend this project's approach again? Why or why not? If you were to address this problem again, what would you do differently?*

RESOURCES

The Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago is prepared to help new and experienced service learning educators. Contact CRFC at: *Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago*, Diana Hess, 407 S. Dearborn, Suite 1700, Chicago, Illinois 60605 (312) 663-9057. Following is a sampling of services available from CRFC, along with a list of other resources.

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago

Training
CRFC offers a variety of workshops on service learning at teacher trainings, conferences, and institutes conducted throughout the year. Consult the CRFC newsletter, *The Legal Circle*, for information on upcoming events.

Technical Assistance
CRFC staff members can provide technical assistance by letter, phone, or through meetings that can help with service learning. Referrals to teachers currently using service learning are also available.

Service Learning Library
CRFC houses a library of civic education materials, many of which emphasize service learning. Please call for resource recommendations or make an appointment to come in and browse.

Service Learning Leadership Conferences for Students
CRFC plans to continue service learning conferences for high school students and expand them to middle school students. This is dependent on future funding, so contact the CRFC office for the latest program news.

Consultant Services
CRFC staff members have worked with school districts throughout Illinois and the nation to establish service learning/social studies programs and would be pleased to work with the teachers in your school district to develop, refine, or evaluate a service learning program.

CRFC

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago
407 S. Dearborn, Suite 1700, Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 663-9057

Other Organizations

Active Citizenship Today (ACT)
A service learning collaboration of the Close Up Foundation and Constitutional Rights Foundation funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

Close Up Foundation
Donna Power, 44 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 706-3300

Constitutional Rights Foundation *(in Los Angeles)*
Susan Philips, 601 South Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
(213) 487-5590

Activism 2000 Project
Wendy Schaetzel Lesko, P.O. Box E
Kensington, MD 20895
(301) 929-8808

See *No Kidding Around!* entry under *Written Materials*.

National Crime Prevention Council
1700 K Street NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 466-6272

Several programs encourage youth to perform meaningful community service. Various publications and kits are available.

Written Materials and Videos

Hearts and Minds Engaged: Teaching Law-Related Education Through Service Learning
Institute for Citizen Education in the Law,
University of Puget Sound School of Law,
950 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402-4479
(206) 591-2215

This curriculum and short video shows students engaging in service learning projects and records interviews with teachers and curriculum experts discussing the educational benefits of service learning.

National Service Learning Clearinghouse
The first national K-12 service learning clearinghouse has been established to provide assistance in involving students in community service programs. The Clearinghouse offers a national database of programs and resources, training and consultant referrals. Call the toll-free hotline from 8a.m. – 4p.m. CST Mon. through Fri. at 1-800-808-SERV.

Network
Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005. Write or call (213) 487-5590 to be placed on their mailing list. *Network* is a service learning newsletter published by CRF.

No Kidding Around!
by Wendy Schaetzel Lesko. Available for $18.95 (plus $4.00 shipping and handling) from Activism 2000 Project, Information USA, Inc., P.O. Box E, Kensington, MD 20895 (301) 942-6303 or (800) 955-POWE.

No Kidding Around is a step-by-step process guide to social action, with a resource guide to agencies, national organizations, congressional committees, and sources of information on state legislative action.